

About ASPIRA

The ASPIRA Association, Inc. is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to educational and leadership capacity of Latino youth.

Since 1961, ASPIRA has been working at the grass-roots level to provide programs that encourage Hispanic students to stay in school, prepare them to succeed in the educational arena, develop their leadership skills, and to serve their community. ASPIRA looks at Latino youth and sees this potential; leaders waiting to emerge. With community-based offices in large cities of six states and Puerto Rico, ASPIRA's 1,100 staff members work with over 50,000 youth and their families each year to develop that potential. These are our *Aspirantes*---those youth who will become educated, committed leaders for the community's future benefit. Since it's founding, ASPIRA has provided a quarter of a million youth with the personal resources they need to remain in school and contribute to their community.

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History of ASPIRA

In 1961, Dr. Antonia Pantoja and a group of Puerto Rican educators and professionals created ASPIRA (which means aspire in Spanish), to address the exceedingly high dropout rate and low educational attainment of Puerto Rican youth. They were convinced that the only way to free the Puerto Rican community from poverty and to promote its full development, was by focusing on the education of young people, and developing their leadership potential, self esteem and pride in their cultural heritage. This was the best way, they believed, of ensuring that youth would become not only productive members of society, but leaders in the development of their own community. ASPIRA conveyed in its name the expectation that Puerto Rican youth could succeed if they dared to aspire.

Since its formation over 40 years ago, ASPIRA has grown from a small nonprofit agency in New York City to a national association with statewide Associate organizations in Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Puerto Rico, with its National Office in Washington, D.C.

In the last three decades, ASPIRA has become an inclusive organization. While still mainly a Puerto Rican organization, it now reaches out to include *all* Latinos and a significant group of non-Latinos throughout the United States. Presently, ASPIRA serves students each year in over 400 schools, through its core activity, the ASPIRA Clubs. ASPIRA provides leadership training, career and college counseling, financial aid, scholarship assistance, educational advocacy, cultural activities, and most importantly, continuing opportunities to implement community action projects. Through its

existence, ASPIRA's commitment to its initial mission of leadership development has remained unchanged. All programs still aim to help Latino youth develop their intellectual and leadership potential so that they can achieve educational excellence and make a long-term contribution to improving their own lives and that of their community.

The ASPIRA Association

ASPIRA currently has offices in the Latino communities of major cities in Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Puerto Rico. Each local office operates many programs that grow out of the specific conditions of the local site but have in common the ASPIRA Process model and ASPIRA's commitment to leadership development and education.

These local offices, with ASPIRA's broader network of 5,000 community-based organizations, school districts, local and national policy makers, and corporate representatives, receive information and assistance from ASPIRA's Washington, D.C.-based National Office.

THE ASPIRA MISSION

The ASPIRA Association, Inc.'s mission is to empower Latino youth through advocacy, leadership and education.

- ✓ Advocacy: identifies problems and solutions to the larger society
 - ✓ Leadership: prepares youth and adults in better understanding public policy responses
 - ✓ Education: educates youth on the knowledge and skills needed to foster a participation in one's community.
- ASPIRA's Accomplishments***

- 275,000 Alumni across the country
- Development of national models in access to:
 - ✓ College
 - ✓ Parental engagement
 - ✓ Youth leadership development
 - ✓ Math and Science enrichment programs
 - ✓ IT training programs

The ASPIRA Process

Over the years, ASPIRA has developed a highly successful intervention model called the ASPIRA Process. The model consciously accentuates the positive, putting the stress on developing the potential of *Aspirantes* rather than on trying to overcome their perceived deficits.

The ASPIRA Process of leadership development teaches youth to become **aware** of their current situation, to **analyze** its consequences, and to take **action** for change in their personal lives and the life of their community. ASPIRA brings together students, parents, school and community members to promote educational success and community service. ASPIRA also works with foundations, corporations, and the government to improve educational opportunities for these young Latinos.

The ASPIRA Clubs

The Youth Leadership Development Program (LPD) is the core program of ASPIRA. Through school-based leadership **ASPIRA Clubs**, students learn the **ASPIRA Process** of *awareness, analysis, and action*. The program provides leadership training, cultural enrichment activities, and community action projects that teach students how to develop their abilities to become effective leaders of their communities. Each club is represented at the ASPIRA Clubs Federation (ACF), an assembly that convenes twice every month to discuss action-oriented activities for all clubs in their areas.

The ASPIRA Clubs Federation (ACF) is a student council consisting of Leadership Club Vice Presidents and Treasurers. The purpose of the ACF is to serve as a link between all New York State Leadership Clubs. The ACF meets twice a month, on Saturdays in the ASPIRA main office, to share ideas and concerns on youth-related issues and to plan and coordinate activities on a citywide level. Annual citywide activities, which are structured, organized and implemented by students, include a City Youth Conference, fundraisers, community service projects, cultural activities and the ASPIRA Prom. The ACF is governed by set of Bylaws based on parliamentary procedure.

- Organizational Development Initiative
- Youth Leadership and Community Service
 - The ASPIRA Youth Leadership Development Program
 - The ASPIRA Alumni Association
 - ASPIRA internship opportunities
- Educational Access and Careers
 - ASPIRA National Health Careers Program
 - ASPIRA Math and Science Academy (MAS) and CASA MAS
 - ASPIRA Youth Venture Entrepreneurship Program
- Community Mobilization for Educational Excellence

- The Teachers, Organizations, and Parents for Students (TOPS) Partnership Project
- ASPIRA Parents for Educational Excellence (APEX) Initiative
- Mobilization for Equity

Parent Engagement

ASPIRA created APEX (ASPIRA Parents for Educational Excellence) in 1992 to promote parental involvement in their children's education within the Hispanic population. The program was designed as a 10 workshop series including topics such as "the importance of communication". Although the program started off under private funding, Title I (government funding) has recently opened new doors to incorporate APEX in schools receiving these funds. The 2 set manuals, which include the workshop series and are both in English and Spanish, can serve a wide range of parents and facilities schools in establishing the desired "Home-School Partnerships", and thus increased parental involvement in student's education and achievement.

Talent Search Educational Counseling Program

The ASPIRA Talent Search Educational Counseling Program, funded by the Department of Education, encourages low-income youth to resume and/or finish their high school education and to aspire towards higher education. The educational counselors provide students with incentives to stay in school, get more value out of their educational experience, choose a career, and enhance their personal growth. The program is directed at high school students, high school graduates who have not continued their education, and high school and college dropouts.

Upward Bound Program

The ASPIRA Upward Bound Program, funded by the Department of Education, provides comprehensive services to youth who need to improve their academic preparation and desire to undertake and complete a post-secondary education program. Program services include: career and vocational counseling; referral to educational institutions; counseling for college admissions and financial aid; application completion assistance for college admissions and financial aid; personal counseling and tutoring for the college entrance examinations; and intensive academic tutoring in English, Spanish, mathematics and the sciences.

ASPIRA Parents for Educational Excellence Program (APEX)

The goal of the APEX Program is to develop a greater capacity of to engage in meaningful involvement in education. To achieve this goal, ASPIRA has developed the APEX Workshop Series aimed at developing parent skills in: (a) the process of becoming aware of the importance of their rights and responsibilities to become involved in their children's education; and, (b) the process of facilitation and formation of parent groups to discuss and evaluate their role in impacting the educational system in their communities.

Parents who have completed the APEX Workshop Series will be given an opportunity to receive additional training and ongoing support so that they might become effective trainers for other parents.

Leadership Development Program

The ASPIRA Leadership Development Program responds to one of the basic ASPIRA goals to develop the leadership potential of our youth. Through student-led, school and community-based ASPIRA Leadership Development Clubs, ASPIRA provides leadership development, educational counseling, academic services, cultural enrichment activities, and community service projects that enhance our students' leadership skills and abilities. ASPIRA staff provides club organizational guidance and support to assist students in planning and implementing activities that are conducive to their development.

Through the ASPIRA Leadership Development Clubs, which provide an excellent environment for personal and group development, the ASPIRA Process begins with an infusion of personal awareness and self-knowledge, a literal awakening of the intellectual strengths, interests, values, communication skills, leadership skills, artistic and athletic abilities of each student.

Public Policy Leadership Program

The purpose of the ASPIRA Public Policy Leadership Program, funded by the Ford Foundation is to expose students with leadership potential to the purposes and processes of public policy, and to develop their leadership skills in order to facilitate their entry into the public policy arena in Puerto Rico and the United States. Through this program, students have the unique opportunity to participate in an internship and to meet and work with public policy makers in the executive, judicial and legislative branches.

Head Start Program

The goal of the ASPIRA Head Start Program is to help families improve by giving young parents the opportunity, through knowledge and skills, to support their pre-school children in their development from birth through finishing school and beyond. The program operates on the belief that parents exert the most important influence in their children's development, and that the home is the center of family life. The ASPIRA Head Start Program is home-based, comprehensive, preventive, family-oriented, and provides a pro-family system that supports families by helping them empower themselves to reach to their potential.

ASPIRA AIDS Education and Prevention

The goal of the ASPIRA AIDS Education and Prevention program is to reduce the high incidence of the HIV/AIDS transmission by offering workshops on human sexuality, sexually transmitted diseases, self-esteem, decision-making and HIV/AIDS prevention. Services are provided to individuals and groups between ages 12 to 22. The program provides workshops that are geared to students and adults, including youths from low-income housing developments, school dropouts, teachers, parents, and the public in general. The success of this risk-reduction program is based on the effectiveness of workshop strategies designed to encourage attitudinal and behavioral changes of program

participants. In addition, ASPIRA coordinates its intervention efforts with several agencies, such as the Health Department (State and Municipal), the AIDS Institute of San Juan, Pro-Familia and other government agencies and community organizations.

Health Careers Program

The ASPIRA National Health Careers Program was initiated in 1965 in an effort to improve access to quality health care in the Hispanic community. With support from the Health Careers Opportunity Program of the Public Health Service, Bureau of Health Professions, the ASPIRA National Health Careers Program has been instrumental in placing students into health professions schools of chiropractic, health administration, medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, public health, optometry, clinical psychology, and others. Students have also been placed in allied health programs such as dental hygiene, medical records administration, respiratory therapy and others.

The goal of the Program is to increase the number of low-income students who enter health profession education and pursue health careers. Students are provided comprehensive counseling services and information about career alternatives in this vastly expanding professional field. Orientation and counseling sessions are available to students as they sort out their goals in choosing their professional future. One of the program's main objectives is to increase the participant's commitment to serve their communities once they become health professionals.

Pre and post survey data collected by program counselors indicated an increase in the number of students interested in the health professions and an increase in student course taking patterns related to math and science. The Program has assisted students with all aspects of the financial aid process from researching scholarships to completing financial aid applications.

Through the program, ASPIRA also raises awareness of critical health problems affecting the Latino community and the need for increasing the number of Latino and other underrepresented populations entering the health professions. Each year, ASPIRA's exemplary Health Careers Program provides over 500 youth with positive formative experiences that integrate motivation, academic enrichment, an enhanced sense of self-esteem, and an interest in entering the health professions.

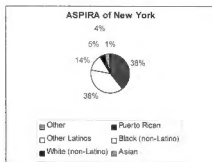
ASPIRA Timeline

- 1961 ASPIRA is established by the Puerto Rican-Hispanic Leadership Forum as a nonprofit, bilingual counseling agency to assist Puerto Rican Youth through career counseling in New York.
- 1962 52 ASPIRA Clubs throughout New York City.
- 1965 ASPIRA becomes incorporated, is declared tax-exempt, and establishes its own Board of Directors.
- 1968 Bilingual Education Act becomes law. ASPIRA of America is created with a \$750,000 grant from the Ford Foundation.
- 1969 ASPIRA of America established affiliate offices in Newark, Philadelphia, Chicago and San Juan.
- 1970 The Health Careers Program, first launched by ASPIRA of New York
- 1971 The Health Careers Program becomes a national program.
- ASPIRA Clubs Federation students in New York raise \$ 2,000 for flood victims in Puerto Rico, collected food and clothing for 1500 refugees
- 1972 Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (PRLDEF) files a class action suit against the Board of Education of New York City on behalf of 15 school children, ASPIRA, and other organizations.
- Mr. Luiz Alvarez took over as Executive Director.
- 1974 The Board of Education of NYC signs the ASPIRA Consent Decree, agreeing to provide bilingual education for all limited-English proficient students in city schools.
- 1975- PRLDEF files contempt proceedings against the NYC government for its failure
1977 to comply with Consent Decree
- 1977 A fellowship coordinator office was opened in Washington, DC signifying the first time ASPIRA had a continuous representative in federal capital.
- ASPIRA of America study, *Social Factors in Educational Attainment Among Puerto Ricans in the U.S. Metropolitan Areas, 1970*.
- 1979 The ASPIRA Center for Educational Equity (ACEE) was established in Washington DC to act as ASPIRA's division for research to be oriented and organized to improve the schooling of Puerto Ricans and other Hispanics.

- 1980 ASPIRA of America creates the Center for Educational Equity in Washington, D.C. as its division for research and advocacy.
- 1981 ASPIRA of Florida, officially opened its doors as an ASPIRA affiliate in Miami.
 - ASPIRA of Pennsylvania begins three-year study on dropout and delinquency rates among Puerto Rican youth.
- 1983 ASPIRA of New York study, *Racial and Ethnic High School Dropout Rates in New York City*.
- 1984 ASPIRA of Illinois *Chicago Dropout Study* released.
 - ASPIRA Coca-Cola Support Services Project (Project A.C.C.E.S.S.) initiated.
 - ASPIRA of Puerto Rico examines the dropout rate in a report entitled *La politica educativa para el mejoramiento del desertor escolar; programas y proyecciones*, that addressed dropout rate of 55 % for students on the island.
- 1985 The National Board of Directors unanimously approved the recommendations to relocate the national office to Washington, D.C.
 - ASPIRA of America officially became the ASPIRA Association.
 - ASPIRA establishes the Institute for Policy Research in Washington, D.C. and begins research for *Five Cities High School Dropout Study*.
- 1986 The first group of Aspirantes comes to Washington as National Fellows in the ASPIRA Public Policy Leadership Program Summer Internship.
- 1987 The ASPIRA Institute for Policy Research published *Northeast Hispanic Needs: A Guide for Action*.
- 1988 The Hispanic Community Mobilization for Dropout Prevention begins a national parent-involvement program.
 - ASPIRA of Pennsylvania opened the Antonia Pantoja Community Learning Center.
 - ASPIRA of Puerto Rico began *ASPIRA a la Cima*, a comprehensive program for high school dropouts that included GED tutoring, individual counseling, and job placement.
- 1989 The ASPIRA Institute for Policy Research produces *Making the Most of Your Child's Education: A guide for Parents* in both English and Spanish language versions. Both it and its successor, *More Topics for Parents*, are critical and commercial successes.
 - The National Board of Directors goes on Leadership retreat and discusses expansion.
- 1990 The President issues the Executive Order on Excellence in Education for Hispanic Americans.

- In recognition of its dramatic growth and success, former Governor Bob Martinez and First Lady Barbara Bush visited ASPIRA of Florida.
 - ASPIRA released three reports based on *ASPIRA Five Cities High School Dropout Study*.
- 1991 The ASPIRA National Board of Directors formally accepted a proposal from community leaders in Connecticut to open ASPIRA of Connecticut.
- ASPIRA of Florida opened the ASPIRA Alternative Middle School called ACCOLADE.
- 1992 ASPIRA of New York holds *ASPIRA Citywide Youth Conference*.
- ASPIRA of Florida expanded its services to some of the rural communities that were devastated by Hurricane Andrew.
 - ASPIRA of New York enhanced their work in all of New York City's boroughs by moving back to a more centrally located Manhattan.
- 1993 Ten parent participants of the ASPIRA Parents for Educational Excellence program, from ASPIRA of Illinois, campaigned and won seats in Chicago's important local school committees.
- ASPIRA of Pennsylvania intensive Proyecto Alcance dropout prevention program earned an Outstanding Program Performance Award from the state.
 - ASPIRA of Puerto Rico began participating in ASPIRA's national Teachers, Organizations, and Parents for Students (TOPS) program.
- 1994 President Clinton recognized ASPIRA for its role in the revised and strengthened Executive Order on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, signed by him in February 1994.
- ASPIRA co-chaired the Hispanic Education Coalition, an ad hoc group of the major national Latino organizations working on education policy.
- 1996 ASPIRA holds its first National Conference, *Latinos as a Critical Voice; Preparing for Tomorrow's Leaders* in Washington, D.C.
- Ms. Antonia Pantoja, founder of ASPIRA, is awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.
- 1999 ASPIRA of New York holds *ASPIRA Circle of Achievers Luncheon*.
- 2000 ASPIRA celebrates its 40th Anniversary.
- 2001 ASPIRA of Connecticut officially recognized as an ASPIRA associate.
- ASPIRA of New York provides support to survivors of the World Trade Center Crash of September 11.

Estimate of ASPIRA Students Served by Race/Ethnicity



Offices

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ASPIRA Funders

<p> Advantica Restaurant Group, Inc. AETNA Foundation, Inc. American Airlines AmeriCorps National Parent Organization Annenberg Foundation AOL Time Warner AT&T AXA Foundation Best Foods Charles Stewart Mott Foundation Coca Cola Foundation Colgate- Palmolive Company Coors Brewing Company Daimler Chrysler Corporation Fund Education Testing Service Edward W. Hazen Foundation Everett Public Service Internship Program Exxon Mobile Foundation Ford Motor Company Fundacion Education Ana G. Mendez General Motors Company Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility </p>	<p> IBM Lucent Technologies Foundation Marriott International, Inc. Matsushita Electric Corp. of America Microsoft Corporation National Council of La Raza National Education Association National Endowment for the Humanities National Highway Traffic Safety Administration PepsiCo, Inc. Pfizer, Inc. Pitney-Bowes, Inc. Power UP Texaco, Inc. Toyota USA Foundation U.S. Department of Education U.S. Department of Labor UPS Foundation Vanguard Charitable Endowment Program Verizon Communications </p>
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